

Those That Prophecy Will Always Be Students

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There is an old proverb that says, **'He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool; avoid him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is a wise man; teach him.'**

In 1 Corinthians 3:18, Paul expresses this same sentiment about those in the church who are full of pride in their clever arguments: *'Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.'* The problem is that the moment we assume we 'have arrived' and are wise, we become argumentative, determined to criticise, and proud. Paul uses clear language to urge us to be humble enough to continue learning.

This is why a school of prophecy is a good thing! We love to hear God's voice through prophecy, and we want the gift to be delivered well, received well and handled well. Here are some strong biblical reasons why anyone who wants to prophecy must be committed to learning and growing.

The gift does not qualify you to lead but to serve

1. Prophecy is Given a High Rating in the Church

'Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophecy' (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Paul emphasises that our journey into the spiritual gifts should be identified with pursuit and desire. The word for '*desire*' here has the meaning of being jealous or envious. It is such an intense seeking that it can be used to describe boiling water bubbling over. Surely Paul intended for this to include a hunger for wise teaching and guidance in practical application?

2. Prophesying is Attached to Our Levels of Faith

'Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith' (Romans 12:6).

Levels of faith in any context can influence the effectiveness of spiritual gifts. Jesus Himself seemed restricted by others' lack of faith. In Mark 6:6, He *' marvelled at their lack of faith '*. Colossians 2:7 says we are to be *'rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.'* We need to be *'established'* and *'taught'* in the faith. If our confidence in God using us is going to grow, we have to learn to step out in faith, move out of our comfort zone and take chances.

3. God is Speaking

'For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:21).

Anyone prophesying carries a responsibility to test their words and allow themselves to be tested by others. The Old Testament prophets were under serious assessment, *'As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet'* (Jeremiah 28:9). There is grace for those prophesying under the new covenant and we know that *'we prophesy in part'* (1 Corinthians 13:9), but there is still an awe associated with sharing the voice of God. Perhaps it would be better to believe that *'in part'* is incomplete rather than inaccurate, so learning how to listen well to the Spirit is essential.

4. Prophecy is a Gift to Serve

'Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up' (1 Corinthians 14:5).

I heard a 'five-fold' prophet teach recently, and she said, **'The gift does not qualify you to lead but to serve'**. Paul's command for us to seek after gifts came from a deep love for the church. That is why anyone who prophesies has to have a heart to learn and sharpen their gift, so that the benefit to everyone else is maximised.

Prophecy is a wonderful gift from God for us. If we keep learning and growing in how to use the gift, then *'everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort'* (1 Corinthians 14:3).